

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

59

Hunting for food, like most fishing, is an individual affair. A number of men have shot-guns with which they hunt buck (duiker, bushbuck, and waterbuck) which are scarce, and game birds (guinea fowl, partridge, and duck) which are plentiful. The limiting factor is ammunition, which is relatively expensive, and few men waste a cartridge on birds unless they are sure of getting at least two with one shot. They stalk the sitting birds and fire (at point-blank range) at several birds in a line. One or two chiefs employ men specially to shoot for them, but in the diet of the people as a whole game plays a very small part, and there is no tradition of it ever having been of great importance. 224 223

Hunting for the protection of life and property is, on the other hand, a communal concern, organized like war. The chief calls out his men who assemble by villages, each under its own headman, and the chief disposes the groups. Attendance is compulsory and individuals or villages who fail to appear without good reason may be fined. Such communal hunts are still organized to kill wild pig, which devastate the gardens of some chiefdoms. We took part in one to which five village groups consisting of about 160 men and boys came. Formerly they were organized also if lion or leopard or other big game attacked men or cattle. The aim was to surround the animal and spear it, and here the importance of village relations became apparent, for the Nyakyusa argued that a man was less likely to be a coward if, in moments of danger, he stood with his relatives and village neighbours. 'We said that people of different age-villages should not stand together, every man should have his friends or relatives near him, so that if the leopard caught him the others would have to help and not shrink back! So people of the same age-village stood together, or relatives with relatives.' 224

Towards the end of last century Nyakyusa country abounded in big game.¹ Elephant were purposely shot out before 1935 because they were so destructive of crops, but lion, leopard, buffalo, hippo, and crocodile are still fairly common. [136]●

¹ Elton, op. cit., p. 319; D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. VI (1890), p. 282; 'Crater-lakes north of Lake Nyasa', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. V (1895), p. 119; F. L. M. Moir, *After Livingstone* (1923), pp. 90-119.

783 the order to clear out the ashes; messages were sent to the great
 796 chiefs and the senior territorial nobles of the plain, and they told
 [643] their juniors. A sacrifice was made in one of the sacred groves of
 the Kyungus and all fires in the whole Ngonde plain were put out.
 And then

all the chiefs from every country near Mbande and the nobles and all
 the village headmen and all the ordinary men and women, too, went
 to Kyimbwe where we threw away the sickness of all the country.

At Kyimbwe, which is the crossroads in the bush, they threw
 away the ashes of their old fires, and some of the pots and baskets
 in which food is served; while those few people who could not get
 to Kyimbwe threw them away from their own houses on the
 same day as the others. At Kyimbwe new fire was made with a
 [372] fire-drill by the nobles of Ngonde who

ran with it without looking back and the people danced alongside
 them and speared one another! . . . They said, 'Let us dance, let us
 fight that the homesteads may be peaceful'. . . 'Let us throw out the
 ashes that death may leave the homesteads and they be at peace.' It
 is to bring out war from within (*ukusasya*).

The symbolism is the same as in the rituals of kinship when kins-
 men gather to admit their quarrels and press one another to
 speak out, so that they may cleanse themselves of anger.

The new fire was distributed to the whole plain in order.
 Great chiefs and senior nobles took it first and passed it to their
 juniors, chiefs passed to village headmen, and in each group the
 common people got it from their own ruling noble or their own
 village headman.

In July 1937, while we were visiting Ngonde, there was a
 [731] plague of rats¹ which threatened the food supply, and Bungulu,
 [136] the wife of a chief and well known as a prophetess, went into a
 [791] trance and revealed that the rats were caused by the anger of the
 [787] previous Kyungu and could be got rid of only by a ritual 'throwing
 out the rubbish' and sacrifice. Her husband reported the matter
 to Mulwa, the premier noble of Ngonde, to whom the present
 Kyungu, Peter—at one time a Church member—had long since
 handed over all responsibility for communal rituals. Mulwa called
 four of the leading chiefs who were pagan and a number of

¹ Nothing new in Ngonde. Lord (then Captain) Lugard suffered from them in
 1888: F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893), vol. i, p. 127. In 1937
 the country swarmed with rats: in our own camp we killed 70 to 100 each night.

people's needs. The importance of this can scarcely be overemphasised for a peasant people who are adopting a cash economy and are socially and emotionally deeply attached to their land - their single, continuous source of capital and their tribal heritage. Apart from the possibilities of labour migration which, so far at any rate, are taken up only temporarily and by the younger men, there are no economic opportunities and no capital to compete with the land. In non-economic life the land remains supreme as the persisting basis of society. [61] 423 [167]

As late as 1940 the District Commissioner, Rungwe, was able to write that there was most generally sufficient land for the people's needs in all parts of the country, and the only competition was perhaps in respect of the very best and most fertile tracts, as had always been the case. G. Wilson recorded similar remarks in the late nineteen-thirties. That these observations were correct cannot be doubted. It is known, for instance, that until the post-war years in the Lake Plains - where now land shortage is most acute - there was a broad belt of mainly unoccupied, uncultivated bushland, infested with game, extending from the Livingstone Mountains in the east to the Nyasaland border in the south-west. There were extensive, more or less empty areas in almost every chiefdom. The people were subsistence farmers only, and also banana eaters, and in this well-watered country their agricultural requirements were adequately met on very modest holdings, from most of which two harvests a year could be gathered. [136] [137] [162]

In the brief period of little more than ten years the situation has altered radically to the point of a general shortage of land (except for some parts in the north-west), and especially in the Lake Plains the available land is quite insufficient to meet the demands of the inhabitants. This critical change is the result partly of an increasing population, augmented by some immigration from other tribal areas; but more especially it is the result of the demands for larger arable holdings to meet cash crop aspirations - i.e., money earning. Although both coffee and paddy rice cultivation had begun before 1939, and both were encouraged and developed during the War years, it was not until after 1945 that both of these cash crops became well and generally established and the demand for money incomes became universal. [433]

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It was in order to investigate this new situation, which was beginning to become serious and to cause concern to Government, that I made a sociological survey in 1955. I had already spent some months in the country in 1954 investigating labour migration in order to provide Government with information and to make recommendations to deal with the problems arising. The second period of work occupied about five months. During both enquiries I was extremely fortunate in having the use of the excellent monographs of G. and M. Wilson who had carried out a conventional anthropological study of the Nyakyusa between 1934 and 1938. Without their basic work behind me, neither of my two studies would have been possible in so brief a time, and I must gratefully acknowledge the real value of their writings. [121]

The intention had been that a complete enquiry should be made into Nyakyusa land conditions in all parts of the country, and that it should culminate in a full recording of tribal land law and custom with a view to its possible reform. In the event only the initial enquiry in the field in the Lake Plains was completed and the results of that alone are described in this essay. Whereas in former days there were probably few distinctive differences between the various parts of the country, in modern times with the introduction of different cash crops, with differential population growths and varying demands on the land, important divergences seem to be arising. For example, [177] 670

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

140

F. Rudolf Lehmann

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the women, but the men are responsible for keeping the floor of the stable in good repair. For this purpose a specific tool is used, called *ukutoba indobelu*. It is round on top, flattened on the lower side and provided with a handle.

224

5. *Hunting*. Sometimes the Nyakyusa go out to hunt, but nowadays hunting is much more restricted than in former times as described e. g. by Mackenzie in his book: "The spirit-ridden Konde" (London 1925). This record, however, deals mostly with the Ngonde of the environment of Karonga whose interesting social history was unsurpassably revealed to us by Mr. Godfrey Wilson's treatise: "The Constitution of Ngonde" (The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, Number Three. Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia 1939.) Hunting in the Nyakyusa country is now curtailed by governmental regulations. Hunting (*ukufuema*), therefore, does not supply an essential part of the food requirements of the natives. The colobus apes on the slopes of the Rungwe volcano and the Poroto Mountains are sometimes killed for their attractive black and white skins, but fortunately this is now forbidden by the government. Otherwise these apes would be exterminated in quite a short time, since the skins of these apes are in great demand with some Europeans for rugs and covers. Naturally, the hunting of lions and especially of leopards, which even nowadays still cause great damage, is not restricted.

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The hunting of game for food is often done with dogs (*imbwa*) which have small bells (*inyesi*) on collars round their necks. Thereby the hunter (*umfuemi*) always knows the whereabouts of his dog. The chase is continued till the dog or dogs are exhausted. The object of the hunt (*umfuemu*) is generally a small type of antelope (*akasya*), e. g. in the environment of Mwakalele, as I was instructed. The usual time for hunting is the cooler season, but to-day a permit of the government is also required.

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Catching birds by means of traps (*untegu*, pl. *imitegu*) is still common in the Nyakyusa area. I have also seen such traps constructed by means of the flicking-gallow's principle also in the vicinity of Utengule among the Safwa. The herd boys especially set traps to catch quails (*imbesi*) when the *malesi* (millet) harvest is over. Sometimes smaller birds are also coursed until they are exhausted and then slain. One day I found a stick vertically put on the soil and with a triangle made of smaller sticks at its top. The horizontal part of which was smeared with an adhesive substance. I was told that this was a trap for birds,

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Notes on the daily life of the Nyakyusa

143

grubbing for food outside the stable. Old people also eat the meat of apes (*salila*, ape) and of jakal (*ingebe*). The Nyakyusa men are generally very fond of eating fowl, indeed: "*Wakugana inyama sya inguku*", they are fond of the flesh of fowl. 262 [192]

Bones are usually given to the children for gnawing. Eight to ten boys may be seen sitting in a circle and alternately gnaw on the same bone, often drinking a little milk (*ulukama*) the while.

During a boating on Lake Nyasa I saw the well-known columnar clouds formed by the so-called Kungu-flies in the distance above the surface of the water. These flies are also eaten by the peoples on the shore of the Lake. When these insects come shore-wards they are caught, roasted at home and then eaten. But I was told that sometimes they are also caught and eaten out on the Lake, being squeezed into lumps between the hands. [136] 252

The Nyakyusa eat with the right hand, but when the meal consists of such food as boiled maize and beans (*ingate*) they also use spoons (*uluiko*) made of folded strips of banana leaves. Nowadays, however, tin spoons and tin plates have come into wide use. The ancient eating-mats (*akatefu*, diminutive of *urutefu*) are also being more and more displaced. 264 [412] [178] 285

When the meal is over, the vessels and plates are cleaned with the fingers, bent inward, and then licked off. The mouth is rinsed out with water.

10. Diet. The vegetable diet is roughly the following. The light meal in the morning consists mostly of boiled maize-cobs (*ingate*), sweet potatoes (*imbatata*), bananas (*ilitoki*, pl. *amatoki*), roasted bananas; or, *amawifu*, sweet bananas. The main meal in the evening, shortly before sunset, usually consists of flour porridge (*ikiyindi*), beans (*indima*), both often boiled together with maize, peas (*efinyaga*) very often in the form of porridge, maize-corns (*ikirombe*) and groundnuts (*isya-bala*, pl. *amasyabala*). These groundnuts are dried in the sun on mats. Bananas, if dried in the same manner, are usually halved lengthwise and spread out sometimes on banana leaves. I have seen this done in the village of Katunba. Granary stores are very often, e. g. near Uten-gule (on the border of Nyakyusa and Safwa culture), erected on platforms supported by poles. The container is a big quadrangular basket, roughly three by three meters in length and 1 m in height. The roof has the shape of a large Chinese hat and can be taken off from the lower part of the granary. 262 264 [251] [285] 415

[P.238A]

- 241 Other foodstuffs grown are coca-yams, cow
peas, pigeon peas, Bambarra groundnuts,
ginger, cardamon, groundnuts, wheat, pump-
kins, peppers, citrus, sugar cane and European
vegetables, including a quantity of European
potatoes.

Economic Crops

- 245 One of the main cash crops is coffee, which
was introduced about 1900 by the Berlin
Lutheran Mission, but it was not grown by
natives until 1930 when an attempt was made
to organize an industry. It had already been
tried from 1924 onwards by Europeans but
had gradually died out, giving place to tea.

- 245 Native coffee has not been truly successful
and many reasons are suspected for this. In
effect, the coffee suffers from many pests and
diseases and yields are so low as to be almost
uneconomical even to a tribe of very low
individual annual income. It has become
obvious that coffee can only be grown by
natives if shaded by bananas and mulched
heavily with banana trash. Multiple-stem
pruning is gaining favour.

- Seedlings are planted out in December and
the first crop is obtained four years after. The
area planted rose in 1939 to 5,864 acres and
the number of native planters to 7,966. Yields,
however, are low, varying from 131.4 kg. to
20.4 kg. parchment to the acre. Hemeleia
leaf disease and yellow and white borer are
prevalent all over the coffee-growing area. Over
the period since 1932 the price paid to natives
has averaged 44 cents a kg. for parchment.

- [438] All coffee is collected and sold by Native
Authority after rough grading and, in order to
[432] encourage better preparation, much lower pay-
ments are made for the inferior grades. A
native staff is employed to visit coffee plots
and to give instructions, and it is noticeable
that the quality of preparation varies with the
price.

- 175 The cultivation of rice on the lake shore
was started by Chief Koroso in 1896 with seed
243 obtained from Arab traders in Nyasaland and
the Moravian Mission issued further seed in
1898. Being an innovation, rice was not
popular and little was grown except for small
[651] local sales. In 1917 the Government issued seed
and tax was paid in rice instead of money.
Interest was hereby aroused and the cultivation
of rice was started. In 1932 several other kinds
of seed were issued and now sixteen varieties
243 are found. "Faya", which was issued in 1929,
gives the best yields and is the variety chiefly
grown, other varieties being Bungala, Marula